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INFO RUEHPC/AMEMBASSY LOME PRIORITY 0919
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 007335

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [TO](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: TOGO: MEETING WITH ERIC AMERDING (UFC)

REF: PARIS 7153

PARIS 00007335 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Acting DCM Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Senior UFC member Eric Amerding on November 8 said that he had discussed Togo with EU Commission members on November 7, in response to an EU request for UFC views on developments in Togo. Amerding told the EU representatives that the Faure regime was not acting in good faith with respect to the August 20 Global Political Agreement, particularly with respect to the CENI and the follow-up committee. UFC leader Gilchrist Olympio confirmed to us that he will represent the UFC and attend the November 13 meeting. Amerding indicated that the UFC would focus on the June 24, 2007, legislative elections in an effort to ensure that they are free and fair, noting the Faure regime's failure to pursue EU elections assistance in a timely manner and to present a calendar of steps leading to the elections. Amerding expressed concerns about China's growing presence in Africa and how China could provide a tempting but possibly unsavory alternative to Western support for the elections. He criticized France for backing Faure and showing little interest in the opposition's concerns, with other Europeans following France's lead. Amerding worried that the Faure regime would continue to try to manipulate and chip away at the August 20 Agreement while trying to present a plausibly acceptable image to the outside world. He requested that the U.S. remain firmly engaged in Togo and do its best to pressure Faure to meet his obligations under the agreement. Despite Amerding's detailed explanation of the state of play and UFC thinking, he gave the impression that the Olympio camp is still focusing more on process-like issues than in finding a way to become actively engaged. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

DISCUSSION AT THE EU

12. (C) Senior UFC member Eric Amerding, one of UFC leader Gilchrist Olympio's closest associates, meet with Assistant Africa Watcher November 8, following Amerding's request for a meeting. He began by describing his November 7 discussions in Brussels with EU Commission officials Lopez Branco and Bruno Gatta, who work for Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid. Amerding explained that Michel's office had invited him to go to Brussels. Michel had just sent a team to Togo to check progress on the election planning and other matters related to the transition. Amerding said that the team had returned to Brussels, was not happy with what it saw in Togo, and had invited the UFC to send Amerding to Brussels to provide the

UFC assessment of developments.

FAURE REGIME NOT ACTING IN GOOD FAITH

13. (C) Amerding told the EU officials that the Faure regime was not acting in good faith in implementing the August 20 Global Political Agreement (the "Agreement"). He emphasized two cases. First, the GOT had rejected a UFC proposal to name a UFC person or other opposition figure as head of the CENI. Amerding said this was very important because election commission chiefs in the past (1998, 2003, 2005) had issued results ordered by the presidency, not the "real" results of elections in those years. Amerding told the EU officials that having a Faure crony as head of the CENI would be a mistake, giving the GOT leverage over the commission that it had exploited in the past.

14. (C) The second point Amerding raised in Brussels was the "comite de suivi," the follow-up committee (the "Committee") to be formed after the signing of the Agreement that would oversee its implementation. Amerding described the Faure regime's efforts to complicate UFC participation. According to him, Burkina Faso President Compaore, as head of the Committee, had in the last week of October prepared letters to all committee participants. These letters were hand-carried by a Compaore aide to Lome and given to the GOT to distribute. The letters said that the six participant groups were each to name a Committee member and vice-member/alternate by November 6. Amerding said that all of the letters were delivered except the one addressed to the UFC. The UFC found out about the contents of the letter from the CDPA party. Amerding said he had no doubt that the GOT had deliberately failed to deliver the letter in order to complicate UFC action. However, the UFC was able to meet the November 6 deadline and had faxed its response to President Compaore.

PARIS 00007335 002 OF 003

15. (C) The UFC named Gilchrist Olympio as its Committee member and G. Latevi Lawson as his alternate. Amerding said that he was not sure Olympio would accept the position or travel to Ouagadougou for the November 13 meeting. He had been considering a trip to Lome on November 15, during which he planned to meet with his followers but did not plan to meet with the GOT. (NOTE: Olympio contacted us later on November 8 and said that he would represent the UFC on the Committee and would attend the November 13 meeting in Ouagadougou. END NOTE.)

LITTLE TRUST IN FAURE

16. (C) More generally, Amerding predicted that Faure would continue to chip away at the Agreement, cutting corners here and there, always probing to see what he could get away with. Meanwhile, he would continue to give the impression of being more open and modern than his father, and in this way meet the minimal demands of the international community.

NO SHORT-TERM UFC STRATEGY

17. (C) When asked what the UFC and other opposition elements intended to do in the short term and whether there were other battles looming, Amerding had no ready answer. He indicated that UFC and opposition attention would now shift to the June 24, 2007, legislative elections. It was important that each and every step of the elections process be transparent, fair, and open to outside scrutiny. He had no doubt the GOT would put up obstacles wherever it could.

18. (C) The Faure regime was already showing its shortcomings. Amerding noted the failure of the GOT to announce an election calendar that would show the steps leading to the June 24 vote. All of these steps were important -- taking an accurate census, registering voters, organizing polling stations, printing ballots, registering

candidates, and the many other activities necessary for holding fair elections. So far, there was no evidence the Faure regime had done any of these things or was even thinking about such tasks.

¶9. (C) Another problem was outside support for the elections. Amerding said that the EU generally required eight months of lead time to organize its participation in elections, particularly with respect to funding issues. Amerding said the GOT had so far done nothing to seek EU support, with time running short. Amerding said that Olympio had recently written to the EU and Compaore alerting them to this problem. "Once again, Olympio is doing the work of the GOT," Amerding lamented.

QUALMS ABOUT CHINA

¶10. (C) At this point, Amerding expressed unease about China's increasing presence in Africa. He said that China's "no strings attached" policies and general indifference to human rights, good governance, and similar issues were potentially quite appealing to leaders like Faure, who might find in China a generous partner that did not make life difficult over issues like human rights. "They appeal to the worst instincts of some of Africa's leaders," he commented. Amerding said that, while perhaps unlikely, it was possible that China could provide assistance to Togo (either general funding or funds earmarked for elections support) that Faure could use to finance the elections. If so, Faure would then not need EU or Western support (and would avoid the oversight that would come with it). Amerding said that China had a quite visible presence in Togo and that the Chinese community there was becoming a factor in the economy, at all levels.

¶11. (C) To illustrate changing PRC attitudes, Amerding said that China had some years previously financed a sports stadium project in Lome. Originally, the GOT was supposed to provide 25 percent of the funding. Initially, when the GOT failed to follow through, the Chinese stopped work on the facility, with the project left dormant. Not long ago, the Chinese said they would resume the project even without the GOT's contribution, thus "forgiving" the obligation. Amerding said the project was completed with the facility now in use.

LITTLE FAITH IN EUROPEANS

¶12. (C) Amerding said that France had "chosen to go with
PARIS 00007335 003 OF 003

Faure" and was not much interested in the concerns the opposition had been raising. One problem was that the other Europeans seemed to take their lead from France, in Amerding's view. He mentioned especially Germany and Finland, and noted that the UK was not interested in Togo. For most Europeans, the Togo issue was restricted to the EU's engagement.

U.S. NEEDS TO MAINTAIN ITS ENGAGEMENT

¶13. (C) For all of these reasons, Amerding said that the U.S. role was becoming more important, and he urged a continued strong U.S. engagement in order to keep the Faure regime on track and to keep Togo moving in a positive direction. We repeated the U.S. goal of promoting democracy in Togo and our intention to remain engaged with the opposition, as demonstrated by Ambassador Dunn's extensive consultation with Olympio, Amerding, and Lawson during his recent visit to Paris (reftel). We suggested also that despite recent setbacks, the UFC should continue to seek a way to play a constructive role in Togo's transition.

FRANCOIS BOKO

¶14. (C) In closing, Amerding discussed briefly Francois Boko, Togo's former Interior Minister who had to leave Togo

for exile in France after he called for the postponement of the April 2005 presidential elections. Amerding said that Boko and Olympio had not had direct contact, one reason being Boko's unwillingness to be viewed as a member of Olympio's camp. Amerding said that the other reason was one understood by both Boko and Olympio -- everyone knew that Boko was privy to much sensitive information during his tenure as Interior Minister. If he were seen in close contact with Olympio, the GOT would come to believe that Olympio would then be privy to Boko's secrets. In Amerding's view, Boko and Olympio had decided to maintain a certain distance for that reason, in addition to Boko's own desire not to be viewed as an associate of Olympio.

COMMENT

¶15. (C) Amerding gave a good accounting of UFC thinking and its concerns. However, he continued to give the impression that the UFC is still preoccupied with process-related matters -- for example, Faure's failure to deliver Compaore's letter and the problems this caused -- rather than thinking of a way for the UFC to become actively and productively engaged. END COMMENT.

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